

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES AND SUPPORT FOR ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS THAT OCCURRED ON DECEMBER 26, 2004, IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 12, expressing support to the victims of the tragic earthquake and tsunami that occurred on December 26, 2004. I offer my deepest condolences to the people of Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India, along with all of the children and families across South Asia and Eastern Africa, in the wake of this devastating event.

The toll taken by this tragic earthquake and tsunami is staggering: More than 150,000 dead, thousands still missing, and 5 million lacking basic survival necessities like clean water, food and shelter, and healthcare. The world endured the largest earthquake since 1900 and the tsunami that followed took the lives of children, their parents, tourists and entire families. This is a region ill-prepared for such a colossal and devastating natural occurrence. It is a human tragedy of epic proportions.

In response, the world community has embarked on a massive humanitarian relief effort unparalleled in the history of disaster relief. To date, the United States and other donors have pledged an estimated \$2 billion in emergency and reconstruction assistance.

As the wealthiest nation in the world, the United States must lead the effort to provide humanitarian assistance. A once belated and undervalued response by the United States must now be erased with aggressive and generous action. I call on Congress to swiftly authorize and appropriate the \$350 million pledged by the President so it can be delivered promptly to those who need it immediately.

I also call on the President to ensure that the money he pledged to provide humanitarian relief in the wake of this disaster does not come at the expense of existing international aid programs assisting millions of people across the globe. These programs, for example, help AIDS orphans, victims of drought, war refugees and the families in Iraq and Afghanistan that are rebuilding their homes and communities. Our assistance in these areas must remain a priority.

The tragic loss of human life and destruction from the earthquake and tsunami unite the United States and the entire international community in solidarity and support. My thoughts and prayers go out to the victims of this terrible tragedy and I pledge my continued support and help for their families and the hundreds of relief workers who have come to their aid.

CLARIFICATION OF CONGRESSIONAL INTENT REGARDING 22 U.S.C. 7207(b)(1)

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 6, 2005

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a question about the Congressional intent of the phrase "payment of cash in advance" as it appears in 22 U.S.C. 7207(b)(1) as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on October 11, 2000, as passed by the U.S. Senate on October 18, 2000, and as signed into law by President Clinton on October 28, 2000.

As the principal negotiator and author of the language in question, I can state, without any ambiguity, that the Congressional intent behind the phrase "payment of cash in advance" is the following: that all legal sales of agricultural commodities or products to the Cuban Government or any person in Cuba, must be paid in full in advance of the shipment of the goods.

I sincerely hope that regulations will be issued to reflect the congressional intent of this phrase.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 242, THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2005

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 6, 2005

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce "The Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2005." This legislation is actually a reintroduction of the bill that passed the Science Committee last Congress. After the bill passed the Science Committee, I worked with my colleagues on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to have many of the provisions included in the House version of the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century—better known as TEA-21. Unfortunately, the House and Senate were not able to reach consensus on a final transportation bill.

As we prepare to complete the reauthorization early in this Congress, my legislation still provides the needed emphasis on transportation research and development that will ensure our whole transportation system can meet the tremendous challenges of today and especially for the future. Considering that we won't have the ability to simply build more roads to address these challenges, especially in urban areas, we must look at new ways to improve the overall system, to make it safer and more efficient, and to ensure that the system meets future needs. Good research, properly done, will more than pay for itself in longer-lasting roads, better bridges, faster traffic flow, and fewer accidents.

In the last Congress, as chairman of the House Science Subcommittee on Environment, Technology and Standards, which shares jurisdiction over surface transportation research with the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I held hearings to hear

from experts on the state of the Federal Government's current surface transportation research program. In addition, we heard from a wide array of interests on how to improve and reform the research program, and the levels at which research should be funded. Based on this input, I introduced the Surface Transportation Research and Development Act last Congress.

This legislation I am introducing today is identical to the bill that passed the Science Committee last Congress. It has three overarching goals: to increase stakeholder input to ensure that the people who must implement and use the research agree that it is applicable to everyday challenges; to create the highest quality research through increased competition and peer-review of all projects; and to ensure greater accountability so that our research supports the goals of our surface transportation system.

More specifically, the bill:

Creates and funds an important research program run by the National Academy of Sciences to address short to medium-term research needs. Research will focus on reducing congestion, renewing existing roads and bridges while minimizing impact to the public, improving safety by reducing crashes, and developing tools for getting more out of our existing highway capacity and assessing future needs. All projects funded by this program will be competitively awarded and peer-reviewed;

Provides needed funds to implement a public-private cooperative environmental research program, with the goal of developing the knowledge, tools, and performance measures that will help us better understand and manage the linkage between the environment and the transportation system;

Calls on the U.S. Department of Transportation to take the lead in carrying out fundamental, long-term research to achieve breakthroughs in transportation research;

Increases funding for University Transportation Centers and ensures greater competition among universities which seek to become transportation research centers;

Reforms and increases the responsiveness of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics to the needs of the transportation community; and

Provides States with additional resources to better train and educate the transportation workforce.

This legislation will significantly, yet prudently, increase funding for transportation research starting at \$500 million a year in fiscal year 2006 for Federal research programs and gradually rising to \$850 million a year by 2010. When Congress increased funding for overall transportation programs by upwards of 40 percent in TEA-21, funding for transportation research remained relatively flat. I believe that lack of investment in research has hurt our ability to meet new challenges. My approach ensures that our transportation research is well planned, peer reviewed, properly funded and evaluated and will go a long way to help solve the many challenges facing our Nation's transportation system.

I look forward to again working with my colleagues on the Science and Transportation and Infrastructure Committees, the U.S. Department of Transportation, state transportation departments, and all other interested stakeholders as we try to finish the job begun last Congress.